



CITY OF WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS
Division of Public Health

Michael P. Hirsh, MD, FACS, FAAP
Acting Commissioner

Derek S. Brindisi
Director

September 12, 2012

Dear Worcester Resident,

As you know may know, the mosquito-borne West Nile Virus (WNV) has maintained a presence here in the Worcester community for the past several weeks. The City of Worcester's Division of Public Health is continually monitoring the threat level of mosquito-borne illnesses in the community. It is also reminding the public to take preventative measures to protect themselves against mosquito bites such as applying deet, wearing long sleeve shirts and pants, and eliminating standing water and minimizing exposure during the hours between dusk and dawn. A full list of recommendations can be found on the city's website www.worcesterma.gov.

I am also writing this letter to you today so that you are properly informed of the differences between WNV and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and the different prevention measures associated with each disease, necessary to protect you and your family.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MPDH) recommends different response plans for the two different viruses: WNV and EEE. These viruses are monitored on a weekly basis to determine levels of activity. Based upon the levels of activity, Cities and Towns are designated a risk category for WNV and EEE. When critical or high-risk levels of EEE are designated, communities are urged by the state to cancel all planned evening outdoor activities and events for the remainder of the season until the first hard frost- which is what has occurred in Westborough; and Northborough and Shrewsbury because they border Westborough. This is due to the increased likelihood of infection among children and the high risk for adverse health outcomes if children were to be infected with EEE virus.

In the case of Worcester, this has not happened. Worcester has been designated in the "High" risk category for WNV only. West Nile Virus carries a much lower risk to children. Based on state guidelines, this does not trigger the cancellation of evening activities.

As mosquito-borne infections can occur anywhere, even in times and areas of low or remote risk, citizens of all ages and in all locations are advised to take precautionary measures to protect themselves throughout the summer and fall mosquito season. I ask that you please review the prevention tips we have offered as we continue to monitor WNV and EEE activity in an effort to keep you and your families safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Hirsh, MD
Acting Commissioner

